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The Case of the Missing Author: Who wrote the anonymous Epilogue to Faxian's *Foguoji*¹?

Haiyan Hu-von HINÜBER (Freiburg)

§1.1 The two versions of the *Foguoji*

In two previous articles² I attempted to determine the meaning of “border” in Faxian's (法顯)³ *Foguoji* 《佛國記》 (A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms)⁴ as well as to re-interpret several of its ambiguous expressions and passages. The focus of this article is the anonymous epilogue of the *Foguoji*, a highly controversial passage and somewhat of an unsolved riddle in research on Faxian.

In comparison to the later travel records of Xuan Zang (玄奘 600-664) and Yi Jing (義淨 635-713), Faxian's *Foguoji* is characterized by its simple and familiar style and short but precise descriptions. The very personal style is probably related to the fact that the transmitted version of the *Foguoji* (which according to the epilogue dates from 416) is based on oral additions Faxian made to the first version written two years previously. Even though we only have access to the later version, one can assume that there were two versions of the *Foguoji* in circulation between 414 and 416:

- (a) Faxian's 414 written edition, to which he himself wrote the conclusion (see §1.2).
- (b) The completed 416 version with an anonymous epilogue.⁵

¹ The eminent Buddhist monk and scholar Faxian (approx. 342-423) set forth on travels with four fellow monks from Chang'an 長安 in 399. He reached central India over central Asia (today Afghanistan and Pakistan), where he studied Sanskrit for three years. During his travels he visited almost all Buddhist pilgrim sites and gathered Sanskrit texts of various Buddhist schools. It took three more years before Faxian found his way back to China in 412 by sea, passing by Sri Lanka and Sumātra. During his 14 year long travels, Faxian visited almost 30 countries. The account of his extraordinary travels through India and other mostly Buddhist countries form the basis of the *Foguoji*.

² Hu-v. Hinüber 2010 and 2011.

³ On Faxian's biography see 僧祐 Sengyou (approx. 445-518), 《出三藏記集》 *Chu Sanzang Jiji*, Taishō vol. 55: 111b26-112b26 (法顯 Faxian), and 慧皎 Huijiao (approx. 497-554), 《高僧傳》 *Gaoseng Zhuan*, Taishō vol. 50: 337b16-338b25 (法顯 Faxian); cf. also Deeg 2005: 22f. and Hu-von Hinüber 2010: 415f.

⁴ Citations from the *Foguoji* are taken from the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon 大正新修中文大藏經, No. 2085, vol. 51, p. 857-866: 《佛國記》 *Foguoji* or 《高僧法顯傳》 *Gaoseng Faxian Zhuan* (Biography of the eminent Buddhist monk Faxian).

⁵ The *Sui annals* 《隨書·經籍志》 confirm this and list two titles: 《法顯傳》二卷、《法顯行傳》一卷. Cf. Zhang 1985: 8 and Yang 2005: 21.

According to 《出三藏記集》 *Chu Sanzang Jiji*⁶ one can assume that both the first⁷ and the second version originated from the Daochang monastery (道場寺) in Jiankang (建康, the contemporary Nanjing 南京). Faxian himself does not explicitly mention the *Daochangsi* in the *Foguoji*, but recounts his decision to travel southwards to what was then the capital. He did this instead of returning to Chang'an as originally planned, from where he had said farewell to the other Buddhist scholars 14 years previously at the start of his journey to India. The joint translation project with the Chan master (Buddhabhadra 佛陀跋陀羅/覺賢) seemed to be of great significance, because translating Buddhist texts into Chinese was Faxian's principle aim for his difficult journey to India.⁸

§1.2. Faxian's conclusion in the first version of the *Foguoji*

There is no reason to doubt that the first version of the *Foguoji* dates from 414,⁹ two years after Faxian had already returned to China. Fortunately, the version that has survived to today carries Faxian's own testimony of the original edition of his travel record:

法顯發長安六年到中國。停六年還¹⁰。經三年達青州。凡所遊履減三十國。沙河已西迄于天竺，眾僧威儀法化之美不可詳說。竊惟諸師未備聞，是以不顧微命浮海而還¹¹，艱難具更。幸蒙三尊威靈，危而得濟。故將竹帛疏所經歷，欲令賢者同其聞見。是歲甲寅。[866b17-23]

“After (I) Faxian set out from Chang'an, it took (me) six years to reach the country in the centre (Central India),¹² where I stayed (other) six years and (then) started the homeward journey. Three (more) years passed until I arrived in Qingzhou. The countries through which I passed were almost thirty.¹³ From the desert¹⁴ westwards on to India, the sublime dignity and internalization of the

⁶ See 僧祐 Sengyou, 《出三藏記集》 *Chu Sanzang Jiji* [112b16-20] 顯曰：貧道投身於不返之地，志在弘通。所期未果，不得久停。遂南造京師，就外國禪師佛陀跋陀於道場寺譯出六卷泥洹、摩訶僧祇律、方等泥洹經、經、雜阿毘曇心。On the same note 慧皎 Huijiao, 《高僧傳》 *Gaoseng Zhuan* (Faxian 法顯): 338b14-17.

⁷ In *Foguoji* Faxian first mentions his southward journey [866b16: 遂南下向都] and then the date of the first version of his travel report [866b23: 是歲甲寅].

⁸ See *Foguoji* 866b14-17: 到青州請法顯一冬一夏。夏坐訖，法顯離諸師久，欲趣長安。但所營事重，遂南下向都，就禪師出經律藏。Deeg (2005: 576) misunderstood 出 *chu* (here abbreviated for 譯出 *yichu*) to mean “show”: “(Faxian) zeigte ihm (Buddhabhadra) die Sūtras und Vinayas”.

⁹ See Adachi 1940: 236. Zhang (1985: 178, n. 11) agrees with Adachi.

¹⁰ Deeg's edition of the text (2005: 610) 停經六年，還經六年達青州 is not correct; cf. Zhang 1985: 177, n. 1.

¹¹ The reading of the Taishō-Edition 淨海而還 is evidently false; I follow Zhang 1985: 177.

¹² On Vinaya terms *majjhima-desa* (Sanskrit *madyhama-dēśa*) and *paccantimesu janapadesu* (Sanskrit *praty-antima-dēśa*), which correspond to 中國 *zhongguo* and 邊地 *biandi* in the *Foguoji*, cf. Hu-von Hinüber 2011: 231-236.

¹³ Zhang (1985: 177-78, n. 3) lists 28 till 29 countries which are named by Faxian.

¹⁴ This refers to the land 鄯善 Shanshan on the western side of the Lop desert, see Hu-von Hinüber

Dharma in all Buddhist communities¹⁵ is so wonderful that it cannot be described with words. Because I feared within me that the (Buddhist) dignitaries (in China) would not know of all this, I have neglected my humble existence and attempted the (dangerous) sea route towards (my) native country. The difficulties and dangers faced were almost insurmountable. Fortunately, I was protected by the transcendent power of the three jewels¹⁶ saving me from distress. It is for this reason that I wrote out an account of my experiences, in order to let worthies take part in what I heard and saw (during my journey through India). The year of Jiayin (414).”

On the basis of the passage 故將竹帛疏所經歷 we can assume that the first version of the *Foguoji* from 414 was recorded in writing by Faxian himself. This version was extensively completed two years later through Faxian's orally recounted stories (see below: 顯復具敘始末). This means that the current version of the *Foguoji* is clearly formulated in a narrative manner. This has to be taken into account when analyzing the text.

§2. Text and structure of the anonymous epilogue

The anonymous epilogue starts immediately after the above quoted last sentence by Faxian and is structured into three sections. Because my interpretation sometimes differs largely from that of Legge (1886:115-118) and Deeg (2005:576-577), the original Chinese text of the epilogue is quoted here and should be compared to my translation:

Paragraph 1

(Invitation extended to Faxian and plea for his completion of the *Foguoji*)

晉義熙十二年，歲在壽星。夏安居末，迎法顯。道人既至，留共冬齋。因講集之余，重問游歷。其人恭順，言輒依實。由是，先所略者，勸令詳載。顯復具敘始末。[866b23-27]

“In the twelfth year of the reign (called) Yixi of the Jin-Dynasty, the year-star

2010: 419.

¹⁵ 眾僧 *zhongseng* includes more than “monkhood” (Legge 1965: 116); that is *catuspariṣad*, “the fourfold Buddhist communities”, which consist of the order of monks and nuns as well as the assembly of male and female laity.

¹⁶ 三尊 *sanzun* corresponds to *tri-ratna* in Sanskrit, see Hirakawa 1997:25a s.v.; this means Buddha, his community (*saṃgha*) and his teachings (*dharma*). Zhang's understanding (1985: 178, n. 9) is the same: 三尊同三寶，即佛、法、僧也。Deeg (2005: 576, n. 2530) confuses 三尊 with 三敬 and also the power of the *Samgha* with that of the Avalokiteśvara.

being in Canopus¹⁷, Faxian was cordially welcomed¹⁸ at the close of (the period of) the rains retreat¹⁹. On the arrival of the wise monk, he was asked to stay (with us) during the winter fasting period.²⁰ Taking advantage of the pauses in between (Faxian's) lectures on the collection (of the Buddhist scriptures), (we) again asked him about the travels. Faxian's character was polite and complaisant; (his) utterances were simple and genuine. That is why (I) requested him to complete the abridged parts of his previous record with further details. Thereupon Faxian retold at length (his whole journey) from the beginning to the end."

Paragraph 2

(Insertion of a declaration by Faxian)

自云：顧尋所經，不覺心動汗流。所以乘危履險、不惜此形者，蓋是志有所存、專其愚直，故投命於必死之地，以達萬一之冀。[866b27-29]

“(After his additional stories Faxian) himself said: (still today,) when I look back at passed adventures, my heart involuntarily beats faster and I sweat laces my forehead. Why did I encounter danger and rush into such an adventure without regard for my own life? It must have been due to the fact that I had a definite goal in mind on which I was concentrating in an unflinching and almost monomaniacal way. That is why I exposed my life where death seemed inevitable in the hope that I could be the only one of ten thousand who would survive.”²¹

Paragraph 3

¹⁷ On 壽星 *shouxing* see Rüdenberg & Stange s.v. (No. 5257, p. 404): “Stern des langen Lebens, Canopus”; as well as Matthews s.v. 5846 (p. 826b). Cf. Zhang 1985:179, n. 1: “壽星”为十二星次之一，在十二支中为辰。義熙十二年（公元416年）為丙辰歲，故云“歲在壽星”；see also Lüders 1933 “Zur Geschichte des Ostasiatischen Tierkreises”, especially p. 740. Deeg (2005: 577) translated the astrological term with “Waage” (Libra), although Canopus is only one star in the Libra constellation. The translation of Legge (1965: 117) is also inaccurate: “the year-star being in Virgo-Libra”.

¹⁸ 迎 *ying* could also mean that Faxian was far-fetched from one station on his journey to Jiankang or even from the monastery where he stayed previously. This was often practiced in the Buddhist monastic life; cf. Hu-von Hinüber 2011: 241 with n. 49: *tair Upāliṃ bhikṣubhiḥ sūtradharavinayadharamātrkādhārānām bhikṣūnām arthāya ardhatṛtiyāni chatradhvajapatākābhiḥ pratyudgantavyaṃ/ sacet sampadyate 'ty evaṃ kuśalaṃ/ nocet sampadyate pañca krośāni chatradhvajapatākābhiḥ pratyudgantavyaṃ/ sacet sampadyate 'ty evaṃ kuśalaṃ/ nocet sampadyate trīṇ krośān ardhakrośam antataḥ pariṣaṇḍām api chatradhvajapatākābhiḥ pratyudgantavyaṃ*. See also Huijiao in Biography of Shi Chaojin, Taishō vol. 50: 374b7-9, 《高僧傳》釋超進傳：時平昌孟顗守在會稽，藉其風猷，迺遣使迎接，安置山陰靈嘉寺。

¹⁹ 夏安居 *xia anju* is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit term *varṣāvāsana* “retreat during the rainy season”. This is the prescript for Buddhist monks in India, stating that while they are hindered from their journey as mendicants during the monsoon season, they should move into a residence for three months.

²⁰ A “winter fasting period” is not a tradition of Indian Buddhism, instead this is probably a reference to a local tradition. Legge (1965: 117, n. 1) misunderstood 冬齋 to mean “winter study or library”.

²¹ The phrase 以達萬一之冀 *yi da wanyi zhi ji* was clearly misunderstood by Legge (1965: 117 “if I might accomplish but a ten-thousandth part of what I hoped”) and Deeg (2005: 577 “weil ich mein Leben dahin geworfen hatte, wo es unweigerlich nicht zum natürlichen Ende kommen [konnte]”).

(Admiration for Faxian and moral instruction according to his exemplary character)

於是感歎：斯人以為古今罕有！自大教東流，未有忘身求法如顯之比。然後知：誠之所感，無窮否而不通，志之所將，無功業而不成。成夫功業者，豈不由忘夫所重、重夫所忘者哉！[866b29-c5]

“Deeply affected (by Faxian’s words I) said to myself full of admiration: Such a person (as Faxian) is rarely found from ancient times to the present. Since the dissemination of the Great (Buddhist) Doctrine to the East (i.e. China), there has no one to be compared with (Fa)xian who risked life and limb in search of the Dharma. Through Faxian’s story I do know that if one carries sincere faith, there are no hopeless situations which cannot be overcome; with steely resolve, success will surely come whatever one undertakes. Does not the success lie in disregarding what usually considered as important, and valuing that which the (common) people treat with indifference?”

§3. The author of the epilogue

The anonymous epilogue is an unsolved mystery in the research on Faxian. It begs the question of who wrote it and why the author’s name was not passed down. What follows is an attempt to pursue this mystery. Several facts are known about the author:

- He invited Faxian to come to Jiangkang from Qingzhou;
- He convinced Faxian to spend the winter of 416 at the Daochang monastery;
- He requested Faxian to complete his first version of the *Foguoji*;
- He praised Faxian’s exemplary character as a guarantee for the success of any undertaking.

Deeg refers to the epilogue as the writings of an “unknown monk”²² without justifying this assumption. I agree with Zhang²³ that it is much more likely to be the work of a Buddhist lay supporter or benefactor (檀越 *tanyue*, *dānapati*) of Faxian, not least because of the literary style. Zhang could not however suggest any concrete name for this supposed benefactor.

During the Eastern Jin dynasty (東晉) there were two well-known Buddhist centers in southern China. One of those was the Lushan mountain (廬山) and the other center was the Daochang monastery (道場寺) in Jiankang. As mentioned above (§1.1), it was because of the translation project with Buddhahadra that Faxian decided to accept the invitation of the Daochang monastery. He probably ended up staying there for five years, during which he translated a number of Buddhist texts.

²² See Deeg 2005: 577; in n. 2533; he discusses Zhang on the reading 慧遠迎法顯 which only occurs in the Kamakura manuscript (鎌倉本). As to the name Huiyuan, Zhang (1985:24 and 180, n. 3) actually believes it to be improbable that Huiyuan personally received Faxian in Jiankang, but rather acted as an intermediary: 此所云迎者，非親迎，特為之安排，促成其事耳。

²³ Zhang 1985: 8 and 179 with n. 1.

When searching for reports on the founders or benefactors of the famous Daochang monastery, there are several hints to be found in the canon, e.g. in Sengyou's 僧祐 (approx. 445-518) 《出三藏記集》 *Chu Sanzang Jiji*. In 卷九 (Scroll 9) 《華嚴經記第一，出經後記》 (Colophon of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*):

以晉義熙十四年歲次鶉火三月十日，於楊州司空謝石所立道場寺，請天竺禪師佛度跋陀羅，手執梵文，譯胡爲晉。沙門法業親從筆受。時，吳郡內史孟顗，右衛將軍褚叔度爲檀越。²⁴

According to this passage, the Daochang monastery was built by Xie Shi 謝石,²⁵ the building minister 司空 (sikong) of province Yangzhou 揚州. The benefactors 檀越 of this monastery mentioned for 418, the year during which Faxian is sure to have stayed there,²⁶ were Meng Yi 孟顗, the chief 內史 (*neili*) of the administrative district Wu 吳郡, and Chu Shudu 褚叔度, the general for right wing defense 右衛將軍 (*youwei jiangjun*). Put this way, the benefactors of the Daochang monastery were two high-level officials, one civil and the other military.

The style of the epilogue points to someone with public authority or who is in charge of the affairs of the Daochang monastery. We are dealing with an elevated personality who retains enough authority for moral instruction of his subordinates the likes of “*If one carries sincere faith, there are no hopeless situations which cannot be overcome; with steely resolve, success will surely come whatever one undertakes. Does not the success lie in disregarding what usually considered as important, and valuing that which the (common) people treat with indifference?*”

While scarcely anything is said about the general Chu Shudu 褚叔度 (378-424) in the Chinese Tripiṭaka, there are many references to Meng Yi 孟顗 (384-432) as a generous and tireless patron of Buddhism.²⁷ During his lengthy term in various high offices, Meng

²⁴ Taishō vol. 55: 61a1-6, also vol. 9: 788b3-9. Hironaka (2008: 195) discusses this passage in a different context.

²⁵ 謝石 (327-388) was the fifth younger brother of the influential chancellor 謝安 Xie An (320-385). The Daocheng monastery was also named 謝寺 or 謝司空石寺. On 謝石 Xie Shi, 謝安 Xie An, 褚叔度 Chu Shudu and 孟顗 Meng Yi see Zang 1921 s.vv.

²⁶ Faxian returned to China in 412. In autumn of 413 he arrived in the Daochang monastery in Jiankang where he wrote the first version of the *Foguoji* in 414 (是歲甲寅). Here, he completed the *Foguoji* in 416 (晉義熙十二年). In the Colophon of the *Avataṃsakasūtra* from the year 418 (晉義熙十四年) Meng Yi and Chu Shudu are mentioned as *dānapati* of the Daochangsi. Faxian left Jiankang probably in 419.

²⁷ Huijiao's 《高僧傳》 *Gaosen Zhuan* contains many references to Meng Yi as a devote lay follower highly dedicated to the support of Buddhist scholars, see Taishō vol. 50: 335c5-8 (佛跋陀羅傳): 至義熙十四年，吳郡內史孟顗、右衛將軍褚叔度即請賢爲譯匠，乃手執梵文，共沙門法業、慧嚴等百餘人於道場譯出。337a17 (曇無讖傳): 初出彌勒、觀音二觀經，丹陽尹孟顗見而善之，深加賞接。343a6-8 (曇摩密多傳): 會稽太守平昌孟顗深信正法，以三寶爲己任。素好禪味，敬心殷重。343c19-21 (曇良耶舍傳): 平昌孟顗承風欽敬，資給豐厚。顗出守會稽，固請不去。369c17-18 (釋僧詮傳): 後平昌孟顗於餘杭立方顯寺，請詮居之。374b7-9 (釋超進傳): 時平昌孟顗守在會稽，藉其風猷，洒遣使迎接，安置山陰靈

Yi was renowned as an unfailing benefactor of Buddhism. The fact that he preferred to remain anonymous could point to his modesty and the extent of his reverence of Faxian.

It is on these grounds that I suspect the epilogue to be written or inspired by the civil servant Meng Yi as *dānapati* in charge of the Daochang monastery. At any rate the author of the epilogue should be searched in the closed circle under his influence.

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